1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

This interdependence of bride-price and level of production also explains the limited success, among the more prosperous sections of the population, of the attempts of the Administration to fix the bride-price at a lower and, as it were, arbitrary figure. 511 583

Indeed the development of bride-price under the economic stress of the last decade shows how firmly the new 'want' of higher bride-price had struck root. The solution which the people themselves worked out left the 'indemnification' and the 'economic' aspect of the bride-price intact; it achieved the necessary adjustment by reassessing the 'sociological' or kinship aspect. The contribution of the family to the bride-price of its junior members was reduced to the symbolic transaction of the family head acting on behalf of the bridegroom who must himself provide the bride-price; above all, the new rules allowed a reduction in the bride-price in family marriages, i.e. marriages in which the marriage ties do not establish new, but utilize already existing kinship bonds.

We may mention here certain marriage rules customary among the upper classes of Nupe in which an outwardly similar result is achieved by a somewhat different process of reasoning. We have learned that bride-price is kept low in class endogamous marriages among the nobility; a man of status may also marry his daughter to one of his *bara*, and himself put up the bride-price, so that in effect no exchange of wealth takes place; and there is, finally, the custom among the upper classes to marry their daughters with a very low, nominal, bride-price to Mallams—the remission of the bride-price being regarded as a pious act. In these cases the bride-price is kept artificially low in order to ensure that the women of the aristocracy should all be married to men of the same class, or should marry certain men whom they would be unable to marry if the bride-price were high: the political and religious gain balances the material sacrifice.

The institution of bride-price in Nupe gives us an exceptionally clear picture of the multitudinous structure of institutions. It also illustrates the discriminating action of economic evaluation, which, out of the number of social purposes subserved in the institution, fastens upon certain specific purposes for transformation into concrete economic wants. Yet those that are not thus transformed need not be purposes which have lost their significance entirely, but may reveal it indirectly, in the form of 'theoretical values'. We recall the disintegration of the institution of bride-price in present-day Bida, in the case of those young labourers who spend their money among other things on 'women' instead of saving it for bride-price. Let us realize that in a society like Nupe, in which traditional morality forbids pre-marital sexual intercourse, the 'indemnification' aspect of bride-price also implies the purchase of legitimate sexual satisfaction. Now, these young labourers have discovered that to-day sexual satisfaction can be bought more cheaply, and without incurring the obligation of marriage. Short-sightedly, they perceive only this one need and disregard the other aspects of marriage and bride-price—the need of founding a family, of establishing new kinship bonds, and of ensuring continuity of the group. They admit these other needs—in theory; yet these needs are present, concretely, in 511 583 936

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

the minds of the older generation (though it is unable to enforce its authority), and they will be present, we may assume, also in the minds of the young men themselves when they reach a more mature age and understanding.

The economic demands which we must list under the second heading—demands implied in duties towards the community—are comparatively light. In village economy they are embodied in the regular contributions to village rituals in money or kind, and in occasional gifts to the chief (mostly gifts of kola-nuts or produce, worth between 3*d.* and 6*d.*). To give an example of the former: the total cost of a village ritual of moderate dimensions comes to 10*s.*, which sum would be divided among, say, twenty households. But rituals may also be celebrated both more lavishly, and on a much smaller scale, with a cost between 3*s.* and 6*s.*[1] In Bida we have again certain expenses entailed in religious obligations—alms to Mallams, the traditional killing of a ram on the day of the *Sallah* or, occasionally, labour and money spent on the building of one of the small mosques in which neighbours and relatives worship.[2] Logically, tax should have been listed in this group of expenses.

The last group of 'cultural requirements'—personal wants—is the most fluid and the most difficult to outline. It follows most closely economic stratification and the varying standards of living. As we shall see later, almost every want in this group is seen against the standards set by the social *élite* of the country. In certain respects, however, we can attempt to define certain minimum wants even in this field. Thus every family head is expected to possess, in addition to his simple working clothes, at least one 'good' dress, a dark-blue or white gown, in which he would appear at meetings in the house of the chief and at various ceremonial occasions. Similarly he should own a white turban in addition to the straw hat or cap which he wears on the farm, ornamented sandals of leather, and a stick or carved staff to carry about; he should wear a heavy glass bangle round the arm, possibly a finger-ring and various charms of the kind that are sold by Hausa traders on the markets of the country.[3] A major failure to achieve these standards of personal requirements is regarded as a sign of poverty and disgrace. Often have I listened to old men complaining about the sad state of affairs which compelled them to be content with a shabby cloth or cap when gown and turban were more fitting to their age and status.

But here we must take into account that cultural 'rift' between urban and rural standards of which I have spoken earlier in this chapter. Many wants which either do not exist, or do not exist in the same urgency, in the village are considered essential in Bida. Here the closeness of the social *élite*, both in the literal sense of the word and in the sense of existing social contacts, raises the standards of living. In Bida, where one

[1] See my article on the *Gumu*, p. 99, n. 2.

[2] The building itself is done by the people, the roofing and thatching by the professional builders of Bida. The costs were, in a concrete case, 10*s.*, and were divided among five households.

[3] These charms consist of a piece of paper supposed to be inscribed with a verse of the Koran or a Mohammedan formula of blessing, which is sewn in leather, and worn round the arm or neck.